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Seventy-third year

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Thursday, 2 August 2018, 3 p.m.

New York

President:	Ms. Pierce	(United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland)
Members:	Bolivia (Plurinational State of)	Mr. Llorentty Soliz
	China	Mr. Yao Shaojun
	Côte d'Ivoire	Mr. Ipo
	Equatorial Guinea	Mrs. Mele Colifa
	Ethiopia	Ms. Guadey
	France	Mrs. Gueguen
	Kazakhstan	Mr. Temenov
	Kuwait	Mr. Alotaibi
	Netherlands	Ms. Samson
	Peru	Mr. Meza-Cuadra
	Poland	Mr. Radomski
	Russian Federation	Mr. Safronkov
	Sweden	Mr. Vaverka
	United States of America	Mrs. Haley

Agenda

The situation in the Middle East

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The meeting was called to order at 3 p.m.

Expression of thanks to the outgoing President

The President: I should like to take this opportunity to pay tribute, on behalf of the Security Council, to His Excellency Mr. Olof Skoog, Permanent Representative of Sweden to the United Nations, for his service as President of the Council for the month of July. I think it was an outstanding presidency by our Swedish colleagues and I am sure I speak for all members of the Council in expressing our deep appreciation to Ambassador Skoog and all of the Swedish team for the great diplomatic skill, imagination and flair with which they conducted the Council's business last month. I thank them very much.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

The situation in the Middle East

The President: In accordance with rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the representative of Yemen to participate in this meeting.

In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the following briefers to participate in this meeting: Mr. Martin Griffiths, Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Yemen, and Mr. John Ging, Director of the Coordination and Response Division of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

I now give the floor to Mr. Griffiths.

Mr. Griffiths: We meet at an important time. It has been two years — two years too long — since the Yemeni people had the chance for a negotiated end to this war. Today, therefore, as we meet we have the chance to weigh the opportunities for peace and, I hope, to begin the difficult and uncertain journey away from war.

Earlier this week I had the privilege to meet with a man who has lived the mission of peace and of reconciliation. I am referring to His Highness the Amir of Kuwait. I cannot easily remember someone who has so successfully confronted the challenge of war and then of peace, which he succeeded at, and who has so clearly shown us how to move from one to the other. He speaks so movingly of the process by which his country was rescued, including by the Coalition, and then formed a constructive relationship with Iraq.

Recently, and despite all our efforts, the pace of the war has increased. We meet at a time when the focus of the war is the battle for Al-Hudaydah. What military people tell me about Al-Hudaydah is that it has become the centre of gravity of the war. The Red Sea now is also a theatre of war. We have tried to find a way to avoid a battle for the city and the port of Al-Hudaydah, and we are still trying. But even though the requirements for such an arrangement are not yet met, it is to be noted that our efforts, with the Council's unified support, have managed to narrow the gap between the two sides in ways that nobody expected.

What is clear to me now is that this issue — the resolution to the specific crisis in Al-Hudaydah — has a better chance of being resolved within the context of a comprehensive political settlement. What does that mean for us today? I think it means that it is time long past for us, together, to call for an early resumption of the political process, which has lasted two years since the last round in Kuwait. My principal message and request to the Council today is that we urge the parties to resolve this conflict through negotiation rather than through military means, which is a sentiment that members of the Council have consistently expressed in recent months.

After having consulted with the parties, I plan therefore to invite them to Geneva on 6 September for a first round of consultations. These consultations will provide the opportunity for the parties, among other things, to discuss the framework for negotiations and to agree on relevant confidence-building measures and specific plans for moving the process forward. I ask for the Council's support in this. In that connection, our engagements with women's groups, as well as southern stakeholders, are crucial to the success of future consultations. As is set out in resolution 2216 (2015), I would aim for as inclusive a process as possible.

I did not come lightly to this decision. I have based this on the advice given to me by Yemenis from all quarters in the months since assuming my responsibilities. I have engaged primarily with the parties, but also with civil society. I am especially grateful for my meetings with Yemeni women as I continue to consult with them on elements of the peace

process. Their voices unsurprisingly and consistently remind us that Yemeni families bear the brunt of this conflict and want it to be done with.

I know from that engagement that a political solution to this war, in line with the relevant resolutions of the Council, the Gulf Cooperation Council initiative and the national dialogue outcome, is available, as I have said before to the Council. We know what can work. We have heard it from all sides. We have talked to all of them, and we have studied the experience of past efforts to resolve this conflict. As the Amir was reminding me the other day, 100 days in Kuwait is an enormously valuable guide for us.

An end to this war cannot come too soon for the people of Yemen. As our humanitarian colleagues are quick to remind us — and I am sure John Ging will do so — if we do not succeed together in putting an end to it, there will be millions more Yemenis depending on the assistance of our humanitarian agencies. I am very conscious, as we all are, that each day costs lives that we might have saved, and that people could have been alive who are not today had we acted earlier.

I would like to speak for a moment about what is happening in Yemen. On Al-Hudaydah, as already mentioned, we have made progress, particularly with regards to a United Nations role in the port, which was agreed with me by the leadership of Ansar Allah some weeks ago. This does not mean, however, that the gap is closed. The gap is not closed. We will continue our efforts to find a peaceful solution in that regard. This progress is due to the serious cooperation I have received from all sides as well as the Security Council's active support.

I continue to enjoy the close cooperation and support of the Government of Yemen and its leadership, which is always an important engaging primary partner, as well as the leadership of the coalition. I have also had a series of constructive and positive meetings with the senior leadership of Ansar Allah. These relationships are absolutely key to any potential success we may expect in the endeavour of reaching a political settlement. The nurturing of relationships is the primary task of somebody in my position. Let us therefore not throw away what we have achieved on Al-Hudaydah. I am determined to build on it in our consultations. As I have been reminded, let us not allow progress or the absence of it on Al-Hudaydah deter us from our primary focus, which is on the search for a political solution to this conflict.

I am concerned that Al-Hudaydah could be a flashpoint. I take seriously any offer of de-escalation, regardless of its magnitude, including the unilateral offer from Ansar Allah to stop all attacks on shipping. Many of us would not have wanted those attacks to have happened at all. My concern is to avoid any action with dire humanitarian consequences, in particular those by my Office that may undermine the resumption of the political process in September. I therefore call on the parties, perhaps with the support of the Security Council, to create an environment conducive — and I use these words carefully — a conducive environment to allow for this to happen.

On other matters, I am greatly encouraged by the common desire of the parties to have the many thousands of prisoners of war released. My Office has been hard at work on this issue. On each occasion that I have met with President Mansour Hadi Mansour, he has particularly urged us to take a lead on this issue, which I think is a tribute to his humanity. I know that we all want to see forward movement in this area as soon as possible.

I would like to conclude by summing up my requests to the Security Council. First, I would ask for support for my effort to begin consultations in September in Geneva. Secondly, I would like support for de-escalation in AlHudaydah — and to keep the Red Sea out of the conflict. Thirdly, I ask for support for those measures — I have mentioned one, the release of prisoners, but there are many others — that bring hope back to the people of Yemen. It is the people of Yemen who will ensure that we have a good chance of making the political negotiations work. Without their involvement, interests, advocacy and support, we will not make it. They need encouragement to believe that this can happen. Fourthly, I would ask Council members, as I know they will, to join me in recognizing the extraordinary courage of the international humanitarian organizations working in the country. I have had the privilege in my frequent visits to Yemen of witnessing first hand their courage, diligence, reliability, independence and impartiality. It is an exceptional privilege for all of us to be colleagues.

Finally, through you, Madam President, I would like to thank the Security Council for the extraordinary level of support that it has provided to my efforts. It

makes an enormous difference to have a united and eloquent Council asserting the principles of the United Nations. The Council's continued unity is, by any standards, the key to the resolution of this conflict.

The President: I thank Mr. Griffiths for his briefing.

I now give the floor to Mr. Ging.

Mr. Ging: More than three years have elapsed since the beginning of this conflict, and throughout this time civilians in Yemen have been facing and bearing the deplorable consequences of the conflict. We have heard the statistics many times. More than 22 million people — 75 per cent of the population, in fact — require humanitarian assistance and protection. Three years of conflict have left 2 million people displaced from their homes; 8.4 million people do not know where their next meal is coming from; and the worst cholera outbreak in the world occurred in the country last year, with 1.1 million cases. The humanitarian situation is indeed shocking both in scale and severity, and these figures represent an urgent call to action.

In my briefing today I will focus on the humanitarian situation in Al-Hudaydah, the expansion of humanitarian operations across the country, obstacles that humanitarian workers are facing and the impact of the conflict on civilians.

Conflict in Al-Hudaydah governorate has escalated significantly. Earlier today, we received reports that attacks occurred around the entrance to one of the few functioning public hospitals in Al-Hudaydah and an adjacent fish market, causing civilian casualties. Since 1 June, violence has forced more than 340,000 people from their homes across the governorate. Most are taking shelter in host communities near their areas of origin, while smaller numbers have arrived in Sana'a, Aden and surrounding areas.

Sustained hostilities in Al-Hudaydah city, interruptions to port operations or a siege of the city would be catastrophic and must be avoided. There is no contingency plan that can effectively protect civilians from dire humanitarian consequences if conflict in Al-Hudaydah escalates, as the capacity of international organizations and their response will quickly be overwhelmed. In addition, it is important to recall that Al-Hudaydah was the epicentre of last year's devastating cholera outbreak, and cholera infections in the city are currently rising. It is therefore essential to bear this in mind when considering incidents like the one reported today, which affect public hospitals where humanitarian partners are treating cholera patients.

Last week, air strikes hit water facilities in Al-Hudaydah city and sanitation facilities south of the city. Water and sanitation lines have also been damaged in Al-Hudaydah as forces in the city dig trenches. As we all know, damage to health, water and sanitation infrastructure significantly increases the risks of the spread of cholera.

Al-Hudaydah and nearby Saleef are the lifeline for the majority of imports of the essential commodities of food and fuel needed by millions of Yemenis every day to survive. I am pleased to update the Security Council that these ports remain open and operational. In fact, commercial food imports in May rose to their highest levels since November 2016 and fully met requirements. However, food and fuel imports fell in June and again in July. While keeping all ports open is critical, we are equally concerned about maintaining adequate quantities of affordable imports through these ports. To do so, the conditions must be created whereby shipping companies have enough commercial confidence to continue supplying them.

As conflict has escalated in Al-Hudaydah, humanitarian workers have stayed and delivered, and we thank the Special Envoy for his recognition of this fact. About 90 per cent of people displaced by recent violence have in fact received emergency relief packages. These packages contain food, hygiene supplies and other items intended to preserve dignity. Within this, humanitarian partners are also providing additional assistance to the most vulnerable, including food rations, cash, basic household items and shelter supplies. Programmes also continue in Al-Hudaydah to provide medicines, equipment and staff to health facilities, maintain water and sanitation infrastructure, and truck water to displaced people who cannot access piped networks.

In addition to efforts in Al-Hudaydah, regular humanitarian programmes have expanded significantly across the country. They are working in difficult and dangerous conditions. In June, the international humanitarian effort provided emergency food assistance to 7.5 million people — an increase of 200,000 people since January. It also provided water, sanitation and hygiene services that benefited 6.3 million people — a 60 per cent increase since January. Similar increases have taken place in other sectors. As of mid-year,

about 60 per cent of the people whom we are targeting with assistance had been reached, and humanitarian partners continue to work tirelessly to expand their programmes further.

Partnerships have played a very important role in this expansion. This year, 169 front-line partners — United Nations agencies and international non-governmental organizations and Yemeni non-governmental organizations — are working together to reach millions of people every month. Assistance is coordinated through hubs in Aden, Al-Hudaydah, Ibb, Sa'ada and Sana'a. A sixth hub will open soon in Mukalla.

Generous and flexible funding has also been key to this scale up. The humanitarian response plan, which has been recently sequenced to show first-line, second-line and full-response activities, has received more than 60 per cent of the required $3 billion. A large part of that funding came early in the year through a $930 million unearmarked contribution from the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates. Additionally, the United States, Kuwait, the United Kingdom and Germany are among the most generous donors this year.

Notwithstanding the continuous scaling up of humanitarian operations, serious obstacles persist. Inside Yemen, humanitarian personnel face numerous restrictions, particularly in areas controlled by decision-makers in Sana'a. These include delays in movements, detention of staff and supplies, attempts to influence the selection of beneficiaries and implementing partners, and other harassment. The Yemen humanitarian country team is doing a tireless and commendable job to engage decision-makers at all levels to ensure that aid is safely delivered to the people who need it across the country. However, more support is needed to overcome those obstacles to humanitarian access, including bureaucratic impediments.

The toll of this conflict on civilians and civilian infrastructure is devastating. Incidents in which civilians are killed or injured continue to be reported with alarming regularity. I have already mentioned several recent incidents, including today's, that damaged critical civilian infrastructure in Al-Hudaydah and their consequences. In addition, in Sa'ada, a water facility was hit for the third time in July, depriving over 10,000 people access to water. Last week, air strikes in Al-Hudaydah hit sites very close to humanitarian premises, causing structural damage. In a separate incident, air strikes landed less than 500 metres from United Nations premises. All parties must respect international humanitarian law, including the obligation to protect civilians and civilian infrastructure, and to take all feasible precautions to avoid and minimize incidental harm. We also call on the parties not to use civilian sites for military purposes and to allow civilians to leave conflict-affected areas safely and voluntarily.

Finally, all parties must seize the current opportunity for dialogue and work with the Special Envoy to achieve a lasting political settlement and sustainable peace. Humanitarian assistance — however effective and large-scale — cannot mitigate the destructive effect of conflict on every facet of daily life. The Yemeni people have suffered too much for too long. An end to this conflict is long overdue.

The President: I thank Mr. Ging for his briefing.

I now give the floor to those Council members who wish to make statements.

Mrs. Haley (United States of America): We congratulate you, Madam President, on your country's accession to the presidency of the Security Council this month. We also congratulate the Swedish delegation on its work with such a busy schedule in July.

We are glad to see Mr. Griffiths in the Chamber again. Yesterday, I said to him, and I really believe, that the Council is fully united in its support for him. We truly and strongly stand with him. Both parties need to understand that there is no gap in the Security Council when it comes to supporting him and to making sure that both parties understand that they need to work with him. We therefore absolutely welcome the invitation to both sides to participate in Geneva. We look forward to the outcome and to their positive response.

I think that we must look at the situation. We have long been truly lucky because, if members look at what is happening now, we were already upset and wanted to condemn the Houthi attack on the Saudi oil tanker. That was already considered an issue. The ballistic missile strikes were already considered a problem. We always said that if something did not let up, someone would get hurt.

We have continued to say that the Panel of Experts on Yemen have affirmed that Iran is supplying the Houthis. They are just as much to blame as the Houthis. However, today there was another attack. The idea that a Saudi-led coalition carried out air strikes today against a fish market and a hospital in Al-Hudaydah

that may have caused dozens of casualties now brings us to a new day in Yemen. We have reached a new sense of urgency in Yemen that — if that is what is starting to happen — civilians and infrastructure are at risk.

As the international community, we have to demand that the two parties come together and understand the seriousness of the situation. I think that, as we face that, we will be very anxious to hear how the talks go. However, I think that we as the Council and as members need to remind both of them that civilian casualties, civilian infrastructure and anything that relates to that is a concern. The idea that strikes almost hit some of the water tanks, given the cholera outbreak, and all such things are starting to show a disregard for the people on the ground at a time where they are already suffering so much. We once again emphasize that Al-Hudaydah port must stay open. There must be access so that humanitarian aid can come in. However, we strongly support the talks in Geneva. In fact, we think that they cannot take place soon enough in view of what has been happening in the past few days.

Mr. Alotaibi (Kuwait) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, I would like to congratulate you, Madam President, on your assumption of the presidency of the Security Council and to wish you every success. Through you, we would also like to thank the delegation of Sweden for its outstanding presidency of the Council last month.

Of course, we thank Mr. Martin Griffiths, Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Yemen, and Mr. John Ging for their valuable and important briefings on the political, security and humanitarian developments in Yemen. In my statement, I will focus on the political and security developments, in addition to the humanitarian situation and the responsibility shouldered by the Security Council.

With regard to the security and political developments, we listened earlier to Mr. Griffiths yalk about the outcome of his recent rounds of talks and meetings following the efforts made to restore order in the port city of Al-Hudaydah. His meetings included those with the Yemeni parties, as well as a number of visits to the countries of the region, the most recent of which was to the State of Kuwait, in addition to the initiative that he proposed to the Yemeni parties to hold the next round of talks in Geneva. We would like to emphasize our support for his efforts and those of the United Nations in resolving the conflict in Yemen peacefully.

The State of Kuwait underscores that there is no military solution to the crisis in Yemen. There is only a political settlement, which is underpinned by the three political terms of reference: the Gulf Cooperation Council initiative and its implementation mechanism, the outcome of the National Dialogue Conference, and the relevant Security Council resolutions, including resolution 2216 (2015). Any peace plan that is not supported by those pillars complicates and prolongs the crisis, with repercussions for regional and international security and stability.

On the security level, despite the coalition's announcement that it will halt its military operations to restore the port city Al-Hudaydah and bring it under the control of the legitimate Yemeni Government so as to ensure the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General to Yemen a better opportunity to find a peaceful solution, the Houthis have continued to deliberately target civilian sites and inhabited areas in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, using ballistic missiles. To date, they have launched a total of 163 missiles, in addition to more than 66,000 explosive devices targeting civilian properties and resulting in humanitarian and material losses. The Houthi militias now employ new threats and challenge the resolve of the international community by targeting the security of international maritime navigation in Bab Al-Mandab and the Red Sea — either by planting maritime mines or by targeting commercial ships and oil tankers, the most recent of which was the targeting of two Saudi ships last week using anti-ship missiles. We were on the brink of an environmental catastrophe in the region as a result of the abuse by the Houthis of Al-Hudaydah port as a launchpad for such attacks.

The State of Kuwait reaffirms its condemnation in the strongest terms of those ballistic missile attacks by the Houthi militias on the territories of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and the neighbouring countries. They also threaten the safety of international maritime navigation in Bab Al-Mandab and the Red Sea. That is a clear threat to international and regional peace and security. In that regard, we support the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and all measures undertaken to maintain its security and stability. We commend the decision of the Kingdom to issue 25,000 visas to Yemeni pilgrims from all the Yemeni directorates and governorates, without exception or discrimination.

Turning to the humanitarian situation, the donor conference on the humanitarian situation in Yemen, which was held in Geneva in April under the auspices of the United Nations, Switzerland and Sweden and led to approximately $2 billion in pledges, had a positive impact, reflecting the interest of the international community in preventing the humanitarian situation in Yemen from deteriorating further, particularly in the areas under the control of the Houthis. However, the Houthis' control over the city and port of Al-Hudaydah and over the delivery of humanitarian assistance could undermine the purposes of the donor conference and only lead to further humanitarian suffering in Yemen. In this regard, I am pleased to announce that the pledges we made in April have been fully honoured. We have handed over a total of $250 million to various organizations, agencies and international funds in order to alleviate the suffering of all the Yemeni people.

In relation to the responsibility shouldered by the Security Council, it must maintain its united and firm position with regard to the Yemeni situation. The Council's message to the Yemeni parties, in particular the Houthis, must clearly emphasize the following points.

First, it is unacceptable to continue ignoring the relevant Security Council resolutions, in particular resolution 2216 (2015), and to maintain such intransigence by not committing to constructively engaging in the political process, in addition to favouring personal interests over the general interests of the Yemeni people.

Secondly, we cannot accept the continuing ballistic missile attacks on neighbouring countries or threats to international maritime routes, which will have an impact on regional and international peace and security.

Thirdly, using civilians as human shields, exploiting civilian facilities as bases for launching military operations and continuing to recruit children all amount to war crimes, which are punishable under international law.

Fourthly, it is important to cooperate with the United Nations in order to ensure safe delivery and full distribution of the humanitarian assistance throughout Yemen, and to not subject its field staff to any harm.

Today, Thursday, 2 August, is the twenty-eighth anniversary of the Iraqi occupation of the State of Kuwait. The way the Security Council dealt with that situation was a historic landmark and demonstrated the ability of the United Nations to maintain international peace and security. The full implementation of the relevant Security Council resolutions had a great impact on lessening the duration of that crisis and the time frame for the restoration of Kuwait's legitimate sovereignty over its territories. The Iraqi invasion of the State of Kuwait sent a clear message to the international community that if a State loses its sovereignty over its territories that would have serious repercussions and a catastrophic impact on international peace and security. It would be remiss on our part not to reiterate our utmost appreciation to the sisterly and friendly States, in particular the international Coalition of the 33 countries that supported our right, defended international legitimacy and made substantial sacrifices in order to liberate the State of Kuwait.

In this regard, we reiterate that it is important for the efforts aimed at ending the Yemeni crisis to be based on a political solution under the three terms of reference that I cited earlier in order to ensure the sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity of Yemen, as well as non-interference in its internal affairs.

Mrs. Gueguen (France) (*spoke in French*): I would like to begin by thanking Martin Griffiths, Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Yemen, as well as John Ging, Director of the Coordination and Response Division, United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, for their informative briefings and their commitment, as well as that of their teams. They have our full support.

In response to their interventions, I would like to return to two points: first, the situation in Al-Hudaydah, which necessitates the protection of civilians and the guarantee of safe, complete and unhindered humanitarian access; and, secondly, the essential need for a negotiated political solution — the only way out of the crisis in Al-Hudaydah and, more broadly, the conflict in Yemen.

First, the situation in Al-Hudaydah remains very fragile and the recent upsurge of violence is worrying. We are extremely concerned about today's two-pronged attack near the main Al-Hudaydah hospital, which caused many casualties among civilians. We once again reiterate the priority of France for the protection of staff and medical facilities, as recalled in the political declaration of 30 October 2017. We would

like that the circumstances surrounding that attack be fully clarified.

We again call on all parties to fully respect international humanitarian law, in particular the principles of distinction, proportionality and precaution. That is essential in order to prevent the civilian population, who is already suffering the worst current humanitarian crisis, from becoming the primary victim of the clashes. Many have fled the fighting in Al-Hudaydah, with nearly 121,000 displaced persons, according to the figures of the International Organization for Migration and of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs. It is absolutely essential that the displaced be able to safely cross the front lines and have unhindered access to humanitarian assistance. All ports and airports, including Al-Hudaydah and Saleef ports and Sana'a airport, must be kept open and operational.

On Houthi territory, international and local humanitarian partners must also have safe access to those in need. We reaffirm our commitment to the freedom of movement in the Bab Al-Mandab strait, which must be ensured. In that regard, we condemn the Houthi attacks that targeted two Saudi tankers on 25 July. We have noted the announcement by the Houthis of the temporary suspension of their military activities in the Red Sea. That is a first step in the right direction. The high level of violence in Al-Hudaydah and elsewhere in the country threatens to undermine over the long term the political momentum of the efforts of Special Envoy Martin Griffiths.

Secondly, as the Security Council regularly reiterates, there is no military solution in Yemen. The political process remains the only possibility for the country to emerge from a conflict that has lasted too long. The United Nations mediation plays a central role in reviving the peace negotiations. France renews its full and complete support for the efforts of the Special Envoy to relaunch the dialogue between the parties with a view to an agreement on the management of Al-Hudaydah port, the resumption of talks, a lasting cessation of hostilities and the definition of the parameters of a political resolution.

We therefore call once again on the parties, for their part, to commit in good faith to a comprehensive and inclusive political agreement, particularly in the run-up to the Geneva conference, in which it is essential that all parties participate. We also encourage Yemen's regional partners to constructively support that process. The objective of the Security Council must be to ensure a cessation of hostilities and to maintain the pressure on the parties in that regard in order to promote the momentum launched by the Special Envoy.

Mr. Meza-Cuadra (Peru) (*spoke in Spanish*): We, too, would like to begin by congratulating the United Kingdom on having assumed the presidency of the Security Council for the month of August. We wish you, Madam President, every success and assure you of our support. We would also once again like to congratulate the Swedish delegation for the successful discharge of the presidency during the month of July.

In addition, we welcome the convening of this meeting, and we thank Mr. Martin Griffiths and Mr. John Ging for their briefings. Peru applauds and supports their tireless efforts, together with their teams, to find a solution to the conflict in Yemen and to protect the population under extremely difficult circumstances. We believe that it is important for the Council to discuss the issue transparently, reporting on the ongoing efforts to prevent escalations and to put an end to a conflict that has no military solution and that has brought about the worst humanitarian crisis in the world today.

Peru deplores the ongoing violence and suffering. At this juncture, we are concerned about the risks to Al-Hudaydah, the port of entry for the food, medical supplies and fuel containers that Yemenis depend on. We also deplore the fact that as the Panel of Experts on Yemen mandated by resolution 2342 (2017) reports, all the parties to the conflict continue to violate international law and international humanitarian law, as well as specific mandates of the Council on the conflict in Yemen. The most recent violations are the coalition's bombings of civilian infrastructure in Al-Hudaydah, including the health, water and sanitation services that are crucial to coping with the new cholera outbreak. Just today there were attacks on a market and near a hospital. This must stop.

Peru firmly condemns the crimes committed by the Houthi rebels, including the indiscriminate firing of rockets at urban centres in Saudi Arabia, the planting of anti-personnel mines and attacks on vessels in the Red Sea. However, we must emphasize that any response must comply with international law, and any claims to a military solution must be ruled out, considering that they entail the risk of aggravating an already disastrous

humanitarian situation. The reality is that there is no humanitarian plan B if Al-Hudaydah port collapses, and there is no guarantee that an offensive will not result in that collapse. As Mr. Ging reminded us, many of the people's needs are still unmet despite the commendable humanitarian efforts. We must be consistent in our responsibility to protect them, including by preventing further escalation. If not, we run the risk of pushing the people's support to the rebels and generally turning to the violent extremism that leads to terrorism. We emphasize that the ports and airports must remain open and operational, in accordance with the Council's provisions. And humanitarian aid and the people's access to it cannot and should not be made conditional on any military objectives.

We would like to highlight the efforts of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General to restore dialogue and build trust between the parties, with a view to achieving a ceasefire and facilitating a political solution. We believe that his work should have the full and unanimous support of the Council and the international community. We welcome the announcement of the forthcoming meeting in Geneva between representatives of the Government of Yemen and the Houthis, which we hope will enable us to make progress towards a political solution. We emphasize the importance of ensuring that the parties commit in good faith and without prior conditions and that they act pragmatically, moderately and quickly. We also emphasize how important it is that countries with influence on the parties to the conflict use their diplomatic efforts, and we welcome the work being done in that regard.

Lastly, we would like to point out that the achieving a sustainable peace will require broad consensus on a shared vision for the future. In that regard, it is important to ensure that the process is inclusive and that all sectors of Yemen's population are represented, particularly women and young people.

I would like to conclude by recalling the words of the Executive Director of UNICEF when she recently visited the country and learned that more than 11 million children are at risk. She said that there is no justification for continuing this carnage.

Mr. Safronkov (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): We would like to thank you personally, Madam President, and the United Kingdom delegation for convening today's meeting. We are grateful to Mr. Griffiths, the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General, for his comprehensive report on the efforts to bring the positions of the parties to the conflict in Yemen closer and work for a resumption of the negotiation process. We have great hopes for Mr. Griffiths's ability to help the parties realize the futility and unviability of a military solution. We thank Mr. Ging, Director of the Coordination and Response Division of the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs for his briefing, which shows clearly that Yemen and its people are enduring a massive humanitarian disaster.

We fully support the Special Envoy's initiative to launch intra-Yemeni consultations in Geneva in September. In our view it is desperately needed and represents a unique chance to end this bloody war. However, it will be important to ensure that as we get closer to the negotiations, every key stakeholder is available to help the parties find common denominators. In our view, maintaining a calm atmosphere around Al-Hudaydah and refraining from offensive action would facilitate the implementation of this initiative. Everyone must show restraint and reject any resort to force. We agree with the Special Envoy that what is needed is de-escalation and measures to build trust, including freeing prisoners and detainees. We would add that we need to unite the efforts of every Yemen in combating terrorism on the Arabian Peninsula. We should point out that from the very beginning of the military operation we have emphasized that Al-Hudaydah port, and Yemen's other ports, must be able to function reliably, since there are no alternative routes into the country for a steady and uninterrupted flow of humanitarian and commercial cargoes.

Restraint is all the more essential in view of the fact that two thirds of the people of Yemen are in need of help. The civilian infrastructure lies in ruins and the country is facing a new cholera epidemic. In that regard, it will be vital to continue the humanitarian efforts. We have noted the courageous work being done by United Nations humanitarian personnel, as well as the independent contributions of a number of Member States, including Yemen's nearest neighbours. Russia has also been providing assistance to the people of Yemen through both Sana'a and Aden.

But it is obvious to all of us that humanitarian efforts are not enough to bring the conflict to an end, and neither is military action. We all agree that there can be no military solution to the crisis in Yemen. It is essential that we shift the focus on the current

situation to a political dialogue. The Special Envoy has a key role to play in this, and we support his efforts, including through practical efforts with the parties aimed at getting them to cooperate closely with the United Nations. It is important that he work in Yemen in person, maintaining a direct dialogue with all the main Yemeni and regional players. The potential for collective international assistance to the Special Envoy's efforts is far from being fully utilized, in our opinion, and we still need to come up with a capable, balanced and focused format for supporting efforts through the United Nations, which — and this is crucial — will act on a consolidated basis.

We would like to emphasize that establishing a political process in Yemen would be an important contribution to stabilizing the situation throughout the subregion. We would like to recall our proposal for launching a process for developing a package of security and confidence-building measures in the Persian Gulf and eventually the entire Middle East. This type of structure, in which every key country of the region should participate — including the Gulf States and Iran — could not only help to strengthen universal, comprehensive and undivided security in that part of the world but also resolve long-standing and new crisis situations, including the conflict in Yemen. Threats and clashes must give way to dialogue and cooperation. We must get to work right away on joint efforts to restore a healthier atmosphere, which incidentally would make a tremendous contribution to helping Mr. Griffiths succeed. Russia will continue to consult with all interested parties with the aim of implementing our concept of security and cooperation in the Persian Gulf, which we believe is urgent and essential.

In conclusion, we urge all the parties involved in the conflict in Yemen to take advantage of the opportunity offered by Mr. Griffiths's proposal to organize negotiations in Geneva in early September, the success of which will be facilitated by a rejection of military action and a willingness to work for a political settlement. And the only priority should be a concern for the interests of the people of Yemen.

Mr. Vaverka (Sweden): Madam President, as this is our first open meeting under the United Kingdom presidency of the Security Council, allow me to take this opportunity to wish you the very best for the month ahead. We look forward to working with you and your team and assure you of our full cooperation.

I also want to thank Special Envoy Martin Griffiths for his important briefing to the Council today. We fully support the efforts to forge a political agreement to end the conflict in Yemen. I also thank the Director of the Coordination and Response Division of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, John Ging, for his comprehensive briefing on the humanitarian situation in the country.

Let me turn first to the political situation. We commend Special Envoy Griffiths on his determined and active diplomatic efforts, including his important visits to Yemen and the region. These efforts have helped create a window of opportunity to restart negotiations on Al-Hudaydah and on a wider political settlement to end this conflict and the intolerable suffering of the civilian population. All parties must seize this opportunity and engage sincerely and constructively with the Envoy in good faith and without preconditions.

We call for an overall de-escalation to create an environment conducive to talks. This includes a halt to missile attacks and threats against shipping in the Red Sea, as well as air strikes and fighting in civilian areas — actions that we have repeatedly condemned.

The Council must also increase its efforts to encourage engagement and de-escalation by the parties. We echo the call of the Special Envoy on the parties to, first, fully suspend or freeze the fighting in Al-Hudaydah; secondly, engage in the upcoming political consultations in Geneva based on the Envoy's framework presented to the Council on 18 June; thirdly, ensure the effective inclusion and participation of women in any political consultations; fourthly, respect international humanitarian law, including as concerns the protection of civilians and medical care, as well as ensuring humanitarian access; and, fifthly, exchange detainees and prisoners detained as a result of the conflict, as a confidence-building measure.

I would now like to turn to the dire humanitarian situation in Yemen. As we just heard from Mr. Ging, 22 million people, or three out of every four Yemenis, are in need of humanitarian assistance or protection. We share the concerns outlined by Mr. Ging in his briefing. Let me pause here to join the Special Envoy and others in praising the work of the many brave humanitarians on the ground. We are encouraged to see the Al-Hudaydah and Saleef ports open and functioning. As they are a lifeline for millions of Yemenis, it is essential that they remain that way. At the same time, we are concerned

by reports of the risk of reduced commercial imports, including food and fuel.

The continued pause in the offensive is encouraging. However, the reported escalation last week, including in Al-Hudaydah, is cause for concern. Like others, we are deeply concerned by the reported attack this morning on a hospital and a fish market in Al-Hudaydah, which has reportedly led to a significant loss of life.

As we have repeatedly heard from the United Nations and its partners, a full-scale offensive against Al-Hudaydah would aggravate the humanitarian disaster even further, put hundreds of thousands of lives at risk and pose the threat of a new, widespread cholera epidemic and famine. Urban warfare or a siege would be equally catastrophic.

Since the outbreak of the conflict three years ago, 3 million children have been born in Yemen. Al-Hudaydah alone is home to 300,000 children. We are deeply troubled by the disastrous effects of the humanitarian situation for children in Al-Hudaydah and beyond, including the risk of stunting, which was already staggeringly high in Yemen before the crisis began. As we agreed during the debate on children and armed conflict held on 9 July (see S/PV.8305), when the Council unanimously adopted resolution 2427 (2018), we have a responsibility to do all we can to protect children trapped in conflict. The best way to do so in Yemen is by preventing the conflict from entering its fourth year.

Mr. Llorenty Solíz (Plurinational State of Bolivia) (*spoke in Spanish*): First and foremost, Madam President, I should like, on behalf of my delegation, to congratulate you on your assumption of the presidency of the Council and pledge our full support to you. I, too, wish to congratulate the delegation of Sweden for having so successfully and professionally guided the work of the Council last month.

My delegation would like also to express its appreciation for the briefing by the Special Envoy for Yemen, Mr. Griffiths, and reiterates its support for his efforts to bring about a peaceful solution to the conflict in Yemen. We are also grateful for the informative briefing delivered by the Director of the Coordination and Response Division of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, Mr. John Ging.

Our delegation has consistently stated in the Council its belief that there can be no military solution to the conflict in Yemen. We are concerned by the increase in violence in various cities around the country, in particular in Al-Hudaydah governorate. As Mr. Griffiths stated so eloquently,

(*spoke in English*)

"the pace of war has increased".

(*spoke in Spanish*)

Moreover, Mr. Ging's report made clear the fact that the humanitarian situation is unravelling. According to a UNICEF report of 31 July, the incidents that affected civilians during the military campaign in Al-Hudaydah governorate have led to the displacement of more than 121,000 people, who lost their means of subsistence and now depend completely on humanitarian assistance to survive.

Moreover, according to a report by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees dated 31 July, the indiscriminate attacks on the districts of Al-Tuhayat and Zabid, in Al-Hudaydah governorate, resulted in more than 59 civilian casualties during the first half of the month of July. Unfortunately, 50 per cent of the incidents were caused by airstrikes, followed by shelling.

The impact in the short and medium term of an attack against or an interruption in Al-Hudaydah port operations delivering humanitarian assistance and imported goods could be devastating for the more than 20 million people who need such assistance in order to survive. As the country is on the verge of famine, an attack against or the closing of Al-Hudaydah port would mean condemning those people to die of starvation. As we heard in the briefing, Al-Hudaydah is the centre of gravity of the war.

We express our deep concern at and condemn the indiscriminate air strikes and bombings carried out in the past month against civilian and medical facilities throughout the country. Today, as other members of the Council noted, there were attacks against a market and a hospital in the city of Al-Hudaydah, which killed many people and wounded a number of others. We are particularly alarmed by the structural damage caused to health-care, water and sanitation facilities in At-Tuhadat, Zabid and Saada. That damage and the possible interruption in water and sanitation services increases the threat of a massive cholera outbreak, with devastating humanitarian consequences.

We therefore reject and condemn any indiscriminate attack against the civilian population, including the launching of missiles, the laying of anti-personnel mines and air strikes against civilian infrastructure, including public spaces, health-care facilities and residences. We call on the parties and actors involved to comply with the provisions of resolution 2286 (2016), on the protection of civilians and medical personnel in armed conflict, and refrain from using the civilian population, humanitarian personnel and health-care facilities as military targets. All parties must meet their obligations under international humanitarian law and ensure the safe and unimpeded access of humanitarian assistance.

It is vital that the parties abide by the presidential statements of 15 June 2017 (S/PRST/2017/7) and 15 March 2018 (S/PRST/2018/5) and fully implement resolution 2216 (2015), without any preconditions, in order to ensure the resumption of dialogue, the immediate cessation of all hostilities and a good-faith commitment to a negotiation process leading to a political solution that meets the needs and aspirations of the Yemeni people, in the framework of respect for their sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity.

We reiterate to all parties the importance of ensuring that ports and airports and the access routes thereto remain fully operational, especially Al-Hudaydah and Saleef ports and Sana'a airport, as they are lifelines for the survival of the population.

Finally, my delegation, after hearing the report of the Special Envoy, reiterates, as our other colleagues have done, its fullest support for his efforts at mediation and the promotion of dialogue, and, of course, our firm support for the convening of the conference to be held in Geneva in September.

Mr. Ipo (Côte d'Ivoire) (*spoke in French*): Like others before me, my delegation would like to congratulate the United Kingdom on assuming the presidency of the Council and assure it of its support. We also congratulate Sweden on its excellent work during its presidency last month. And we would like to thank Mr. Martin Griffiths, Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Yemen, and Mr. John Ging, Director of the Coordination and Response Division of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, for the quality of their briefings on the political and humanitarian situation in Yemen.

Côte d'Ivoire continues to be concerned about the political impasse and increasing violence seen in Yemen in July. We urge the opposing sides to exercise restraint, and we welcome the halt to the bombing and the Houthis' suspension of their attacks in the Red Sea. We call on the parties to the conflict to redouble their efforts to support the peace initiatives that are under way. Côte d'Ivoire also welcomes the acceptance of the Special Envoy's good offices by the parties to the conflict and all the countries that have influence on the opposing parties with a view to establishing a lasting ceasefire so as to enable intra-Yemeni peace negotiations. In that regard, we reiterate our support to the Special Envoy's proposal to transfer the management of the port of Al-Hudaydah to a committee supervised by the United Nations, a solution that could make a significant contribution to reducing tensions between the parties and could be a starting point for the settlement of a conflict that has led to the loss of so many human lives.

The humanitarian situation is also a continuing source of concern for my delegation. We especially deplore the attacks on civilian infrastructure, particularly water supply services, which are compromising the efforts to prevent new cholera epidemics in Yemen. In the face of this alarming situation, my delegation calls on the parties to show restraint, respect international humanitarian law and protect civilians and civilian infrastructure. We reiterate our call for a de-escalation of the fighting that would give humanitarian aid unimpeded access to civilians in Yemen in the port city of Al-Hudaydah and every region of the country.

Côte d'Ivoire reiterates its belief that there can be no alternative to a political settlement to the crisis in Yemen. We therefore once again invites all stakeholders to end hostilities and commit constructively to a political settlement to the crisis in order to end the impasse plaguing the country. We call on the international community to support the efforts by the Special Envoy for Yemen to bring the parties to the negotiating table and thereby give new impetus to a political dialogue in the country.

Mr. Yao Shaojun (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): China congratulates the United Kingdom on assuming the presidency of the Security Council. We thank Sweden for its work and its presidency of the Security Council in July. China is also grateful to Special Envoy Martin Griffiths and Director John Ging for their briefings.

The conflict in Yemen has been going on for more than three years and political negotiations have remained stalled for nearly two. The situation there has

continued to have a profound impact on regional peace and security. The escalated conflict in Al-Hudaydah and other areas, and the increased risks of famine and cholera outbreaks, have aggravated the country's humanitarian crisis. That is a situation that neither the Yemeni people, the countries of the region nor the international community can endure.

The fundamental way to achieve lasting peace in Yemen is through a political settlement. The Special Envoy has recently been closely engaging with the Yemeni parties and countries of the region in his shadow-diplomacy efforts and working tirelessly to prevent the situation in Al-Hudaydah from evolving into a bigger crisis. We support his intensified mediation efforts to bring the parties to the negotiating table and push them to cease hostilities and go back to seeking a political settlement and achieving peace, security and stability in Yemen as soon as possible. The Special Envoy will organize and preside over a meeting in Geneva in early September that will be open to all Yemeni parties and an important opportunity for peace in Yemen. We support his efforts in that regard and hope that all the parties in Yemen will show good will and seize this opportunity and try seriously to address differences through dialogue and consultation, break the impasse without delay and genuinely relaunch political negotiations in Yemen. The international community and the countries of the region should help by lending their constructive support.

Yemen is currently in the grip of a dire humanitarian situation. The parties to the conflict should take steps to ensure safe, swift and unimpeded humanitarian access and create conditions conducive to easing the humanitarian situation. China opposes any action that targets civilians or expands or exacerbates the conflict, and the international community should step up its humanitarian assistance to relieve the suffering of the Yemeni people. Not long ago, at the opening meeting of the eighth ministerial meeting of the China-Arab States Cooperation Forum recently, President Xi Jinping of China announced another ¥600 million in aid to the people of Yemen, Syria, Jordan and Lebanon, in support of humanitarian and reconstruction work on the ground.

China supports Yemen's sovereignty, independence, unity and territorial integrity. We urge all parties in Yemen to work through dialogue and negotiation on the basis of the relevant Security Council resolutions, the Gulf Cooperation Council Initiative and its implementation mechanism, and the outcome document of Yemen's National Dialogue Conference so as to reach an inclusive solution as soon as possible. China stands ready to join the rest of the international community in supporting the Special Envoy's work and will continue to play a constructive role in facilitating a political settlement of the problem of Yemen.

Ms. Samson (Netherlands): My delegation would like to congratulate you, Madam President, on assuming the presidency of the Security Council for this month, and to assure you and your team of our support. We would also like to thank Sweden for its excellent steering of the Council's work in July. I would like to express our sincere thanks to both briefers, Special Envoy Martin Griffiths and John Ging, Director of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA). As the fighting in Yemen continues, their briefings instil in us a strong sense of urgency.

My statement will focus on three aspects: first, the political process, including the situation in Al-Hudaydah; secondly, the humanitarian consequences of the conflict; and thirdly, our concerns about the lack of respect for international humanitarian law in Yemen.

First, with regard to the political process, the Kingdom of the Netherlands remains very concerned about the ongoing hostilities in and around the port and city of Al-Hudaydah and the impact of that escalation on the prospects for negotiations. We fully support the Special Envoy's efforts to come to a peaceful solution for Al-Hudaydah, as well as the broader Yemeni conflict, and we support his calls to the parties. We urge all the parties to engage constructively with the Special Envoy without preconditions, and we expect all of them to fully commit to the United Nations-facilitated process by participating in consultations in Geneva in early September, as Mr. Griffiths just mentioned. We also support his call for all the parties to create an environment conducive to such a meeting and to de-escalation in Al-Hudaydah.

No political agreement is likely to last if local grievances and regional divisions are not addressed. The political process must therefore be an inclusive one, and we welcome the commitment to that end that the Special Envoy just expressed. An inclusive political process should encompass a broad range of Yemeni groups, with the meaningful participation of women, young people and civil society. We encourage the

United Nations to further engage with them and look forward to more information on that in future briefings.

Secondly, with regard to the humanitarian situation, we echo the concerns raised by Mr. Ging of OCHA in his briefing about the effects of a protracted fight for the city and port of Al-Hudaydah. The humanitarian consequences for the inhabitants of Al-Hudaydah city are expected to be severe, and the same is true for the population of northern Yemen, which is so dependent for its very existence on humanitarian and commercial imports through Al-Hudaydah port.

In line with the Security Council's March presidential statement (S/PRST/2018/5), we call for the full and sustained opening of the ports of Al-Hudaydah and Saleef, as well as the unimpeded distribution of supplies throughout the country, which includes access for ships carrying containers and fuel, as facilitated by the United Nations Verification and Inspection Mechanism. The use of sea mines around the port and attacks on commercial vessels by the Houthis further contribute to the risks for commercial and humanitarian shipping, and we condemn such practices. The longer the future of Al-Hudaydah remains unclear, the less willing will commercial shippers be to deliver to Yemen. And there is no viable plan B should Al-Hudaydah port be further compromised.

That brings me to my third point, the importance of respect for international humanitarian law. In recent weeks we have seen the number of civilian casualties rise, mostly as a result of the fighting around Al-Hudaydah, but also in Aden, Taiz and Sa'dah. The obligations of all parties under international humanitarian law are clear and, as the Security Council has repeatedly done, we once again call on them to fully respect those obligations. In this regard, we condemn the Houthis' continued firing of ballistic missiles at civilian targets. The recent strikes on health and water-sanitation facilities, and today's reports of strikes on a fish market and Al-Thawra Hospital in Al-Hudaydah, are equally worrying. Damage to the vulnerable water-sanitation system in Al-Hudaydah could immediately trigger a new cholera outbreak, as the United Nations Humanitarian Coordinator underlined in her statement on Sunday. All parties have an obligation to protect civilian infrastructure and humanitarian workers. The humanitarian community continues to work under increasingly difficult circumstances, and for that it deserves our praise, support and protection.

The Group of Eminent Experts on Yemen was mandated by the Human Rights Council to carry out a comprehensive examination of all alleged violations of international humanitarian law and human rights and to identify those responsible. We reiterate our call on all parties to continue to engage with the Group and provide it with unfettered access. Its work remains ever more crucial as the conflict rages on.

In conclusion, we call on all the parties to take responsibility and engage constructively with the Special Envoy in order to come to an agreement. We stand ready to support the United Nations-facilitated political process, which remains the only way to a sustainable peaceful solution to the crisis in Yemen.

Mrs. Mele Colifa (Equatorial Guinea) (*spoke in Spanish*): I would first like to thank the delegation of Sweden for its leadership of the presidency of the Security Council in July. I also want to wish you, Madam President, and your delegation all the best for success during your presidency, and to assure you of my delegation's support. We thank Mr. Martin Griffiths, Special Envoy of the Secretary-General, for his briefing, and support his proposal for consultations between the parties in Geneva. We also thank Mr. John Ging, Director of the Coordination and Response Division of the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), for his comprehensive briefing, which provided a very timely explanation of the real and difficult situation that Yemen is facing.

My delegation has followed with concern the developments in Yemen since the beginning of the conflict, which has claimed many human lives and displaced thousands, leading to an unprecedented humanitarian crisis that has jeopardized the sustainability of the lives of the 22 million people in need of humanitarian assistance, of whom more than 8.4 million, including children and women, are in a very serious situation and in urgent need of food supplies. We share the concerns expressed by other Council members about today's attacks on a market and a nearby hospital that have claimed human lives.

Humanitarian organizations have been warning us about the tragic humanitarian situation in Yemen. After more than three years of war, and particularly now, in the wake of the latest offensives against the key city of Al-Hudaydah, the entire country is closer to famine than ever before. All of this is happening as cholera is striking with greater force. The World

Health Organization (WHO) says that Al-Hudaydah has recorded the highest numbers of suspected cholera cases since the original outbreak began in April 2017. In this regard, we welcome the admirable contributions of OCHA and the WHO, particularly in view of the fact that they have had to provide even more medical supplies and vital services. In the face of this critical situation, we are concerned about the 3 million internally displaced persons who have been forced to flee their homes by the conflict. In that regard, we urge the Security Council and the relevant parties to make concerted efforts to provide safe and unhindered humanitarian access in order to help create the conditions necessary to alleviate the humanitarian situation in Yemen.

The stalemate of the political situation in Yemen is a cause for concern for Equatorial Guinea. The military conflict rages on, the steps taken in the political process have been inadequate and the humanitarian situation continues to deteriorate, so it is important that the parties involved in the crisis understand that a political process, conducted through direct, frank and inclusive dialogue, is the only way to find a lasting solution to this grave situation.

My delegation therefore continues to welcome the approach that Mr. Griffiths outlined to the Council on 18 June, which not only updated us on Al-Hudaydah but also set out a framework for the resumption of political negotiations, to be guided by a set of principles based on the Gulf Cooperation Council Initiative, the results of the National Dialogue Conference and the relevant Security Council resolutions, particularly resolution 2216 (2015), which should include groups from the South, civil society and women, as well as discussions aimed at addressing political and security issues as part of a package.

Finally, we call for the conflict to be resolved with negotiations, not weapons. We applaud and appreciate the work of the Security Council, which, despite the difficulties, continues to devise strategies to restore peace and stability in Yemen.

Mr. Radomski (Poland): I would like to congratulate you, Madam President, on assuming the presidency of the Security Council, and to assure you of our full support. I would also like to thank the delegation of Sweden for leading the Council through the month of July in an exemplary manner. I would like to thank Special Envoy Martin Griffiths and Mr. John Ging, Director of the Coordination and Response Division of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), for their informative briefings.

I would like to begin by taking this opportunity to express our enormous appreciation to OCHA and the United Nations staff members and international humanitarian personnel who continue to provide life-saving assistance to the Yemeni people in extremely challenging circumstances.

Poland fully support the Special Envoy's framework for political dialogue in Yemen. We once again call for the resumption of an inclusive intra-Yemeni political process aimed at achieving a political solution to the conflict. We welcome the fact that the first round of the negotiations is scheduled to take place in Geneva in September. The parties to the conflict must cease to engage in violence and refrain from taking further action that could lead to additional displacement, casualties, damage to civilian infrastructure and disruptions of humanitarian and commercial access. All parties and stakeholders must abide by the principles of international humanitarian law and ensure the protection of civilians. Children in particular must be taken under special protection from the atrocities of war.

It is with great concern that we have received reports of air st ikes in Al-Hudaydah in the past few hours, including an attack on the city's main hospital and fish market. We are alarmed by the escalation of violence, which further increases the humanitarian cost of the conflict and poses a real risk to the prospect of peace talks. We reiterate our full support for the Special Envoy's efforts to find a solution to the situation in Al-Hudaydah and we urge the parties to engage constructively with him to demonstrate flexibility. We expect those involved to make the necessary effort to reach a compromise on the management of the city and its port. It will be crucial to prevent a fully fledged attack on Al-Hudaydah, which would further deteriorate the humanitarian situation, not only in the city itself, but across the entire country.

We note that there have been three successful vessel discharges of food and fuel in Al-Hudaydah in recent weeks. However, that is simply not enough to provide life-saving assistance to 22 million Yemenis. We therefore call on all parties involved to guarantee that all of Yemen's ports are fully operational. It is crucial to ensure unimpeded access to humanitarian deliveries

throughout the country. Access for humanitarian and medical personnel to people in need inside Al-Hudaydah city and the surrounding districts must be guaranteed, and safe passage ensured for those who wish to leave the city.

Let me conclude by underscoring that there cannot be any military solution to the conflict in Yemen. I reiterate Poland's strong support for the Special Envoy, Martin Griffiths, and for his efforts to bring about an inclusive political solution to this tragic conflict.

Ms. Guadey (Ethiopia): I would like to join others in taking this opportunity to congratulate you, Madam President, on assuming the presidency of the Security Council. I would also like to congratulate Sweden on its successful presidency last month. We thank Special Envoy Martin Griffiths for his useful briefing and his continued diplomatic efforts to facilitate a peaceful solution to the Yemeni crisis. We are also grateful to Director John Ging for his briefing. We commend the tireless efforts of the Special Envoy and his shuttle diplomacy with the parties. It is indeed encouraging that he has been able to have positive and constructive discussions with them. We hope that the upcoming discussions in Geneva will yield positive results. We support his diplomatic endeavours and the negotiation framework that he has laid out, which gives priority to addressing the issue of Al-Hudaydah as a first step to resuming political dialogue. We encourage the parties to continue their constructive engagement with the Special Envoy.

Meanwhile, we note that Al-Hudaydah port remains open and operational and that the United Nations and its humanitarian partners have continued to deliver aid. However, the humanitarian situation is still concerning and we are worried by reports on the possibility of a new cholera outbreak due to the escalating violence. The attacks on civilians and civilian infrastructure are worrying, as are the attacks on oil tankers passing through the Bab-El-Mandab Strait, as they have serious implications for the safety and security of commercial ships passing through that major sea lane. We look forward to the discussion on the relevant reports and updates of the Panel of Experts on Yemen on this and other issues at the level of the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 2140 (2014).

Finally, we all agree on the need to find a political solution to the crisis in Yemen and, thanks to the efforts of the Special Envoy, there appears to be a window of opportunity that we must take advantage of to restart serious talks. That is why we also believe that the Council should continue to support him to ensure that his efforts succeed. That is the only way to resolve the Yemen crisis and end the suffering of its people.

Mr. Temenov (Kazakhstan): We too join others in congratulating the United Kingdom on assuming the presidency of the Security Council for the month of August, and in expressing our appreciation to the delegation of Sweden for its successful stewardship of the Council's work in July. I also join others in thanking Special Envoy Griffiths and the Director of the Coordination and Response Division of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs for their clear and comprehensive updates, and commend them both for their efforts to bring a political and humanitarian solution to Yemen. Kazakhstan is closely following the recent developments and would like to make the following two points.

First, on the political front, we note the importance of continuing to strive for sustainable peace, conflict prevention and resolution through political and diplomatic means, including confidence-building measures, by achieving trust that can bring parties together around the common goals of peace and development. We are closely following the recent United Nations diplomatic efforts in Sana'a and Riyadh to persuade the warring parties to return to the difficult and much-needed negotiations. Undoubtedly, the diplomatic moves led by Mr. Griffiths have helped to prevent an all-out military invasion of the city of Al-Hudaydah. They have also facilitated the warring parties' negotiation of a potential deal that could allow fighters to leave. Nevertheless, local health facilities reported in mid-July that to date around 328 people had been injured and nearly 50 killed during the fighting. Kazakhstan supports the efforts of interested countries and parties to reach a political path through negotiations for a full and fair settlement, including at the upcoming political consultations in Geneva in September. That is the only kind of approach that can preserve the sovereignty, independence and unity of Yemen and realize the interests and aspirations of its people.

Secondly, with regard to the humanitarian dimension, we voice our support for the repeated calls of the United Nations for all parties to safeguard civilian lives, prevent deaths and injuries, allow freedom of movement and protect hospitals, clinics and schools,

in accordance with international humanitarian and human rights law. We therefore note and welcome the coordinated efforts of stakeholders — United Nations agencies, non-governmental organizations and the Gulf countries — to provide humanitarian assistance to the people of Al-Hudaydah. Kazakhstan salutes the selfless work of the humanitarian partners who have been providing food, water, emergency kits, cash and health care. Unfortunately, 22 million people — that is, 75 per cent of the Yemeni population — still require protection from malnutrition, cholera and other diseases that have killed or afflicted thousands of civilians. Like others, we share the concerns of the Government authorities and the United Nations system that the hot summer months could rapidly escalate the spread of cholera, which infected more than 1 million people last year. Against that backdrop, we express the hope that critical health infrastructure, particularly reproductive health centres, sanitation facilities and stations that supply water to the population, will not be targeted. We therefore believe it would be very helpful to create a de-escalation zone, where appropriate, so as to reduce military tensions. That in turn would mitigate the humanitarian crisis.

Finally, Kazakhstan fully supports the tireless efforts of Mr. Griffiths and other interested parties to reach an inclusive political solution in order to put an end to the conflict in Yemen.

The President: I will now make a statement in my capacity as the representative of the United Kingdom.

First of all, I thank Mr. Ging for his briefing. He has heard the words of appreciation today from Council members to him and his team for all that they do, and I would like to add the United Kingdom's voice to those. We will continue to disburse more than $200 million to the people of Yemen to support his efforts. I would also like to thank the Special Envoy for his tremendous efforts and for those of his team. I hope that the strong unity that he has heard from the Security Council today can be a real spur to efforts in taking the matter forward.

I think that it has been very good that we have all been able to express concern about the reports we heard today of the attack on the hospital and on the fish market. There was very strong reassurance from members of the Council that it was important to uphold international humanitarian law and the protection of civilians. I think that that was absolutely unequivocal from the Council. Obviously, the United Kingdom joins that stance.

There was also very strong condemnation of the attacks by the Houthis on the Saudi oil tanker and the other attacks in the Red Sea and concern about the arms shipments that are coming through the Red Sea. I believe that we all look forward to the forthcoming report of the Panel of Experts on Yemen. There has been a call from the Council to the Houthis to come and work with the Special Envoy and to implement the Security Council resolutions, even as we recognize the commitment to halting attacks in the Red Sea. I think that we all feel that it is now time to take this to the next stage.

There was unconditional support for the efforts of the Special Envoy and a real hope that the 6 September talks in Geneva can start a truly viable process. The Special Envoy can count on all members of the Council to unify around his efforts and to build momentum for what he has started

I now resume my functions as President of the Council.

I now give the floor to the representative of Yemen.

Mr. Bin Mubarak (Yemen) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, allow me to congratulate you, Madam President, on your assumption of the work of leading the Council this month, and to express to you our sincere wishes for the usual success of the United Kingdom delegation.

I am also grateful for the opportunity to address the Security Council for the first time since His Excellency President Hadi appointed me Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary and Permanent Representative of the Republic of Yemen to the United Nations. I would also like to thank the Secretary-General and his Special Envoy to Yemen, Mr. Martin Griffiths, for his genuine efforts since he assumed the role of Special Envoy in order to achieve lasting peace in Yemen.

Since the beginning of the military operation in Al-Hudaydah governorate, the Yemeni Government and the coalition to restore legitimacy in Yemen have supported the efforts of the Special Envoy to achieve a peaceful solution that spares Al-Hudaydah city and all other Yemeni cities controlled by the Houthi militias military actions and to ensure that the suffering of its people is not exploited by the Houthi militias to further violate international humanitarian law and to

threaten international security and navigation. We have heeded his repeated calls and those of the international community for de-escalation on the western coast.

While the Special Envoy undertakes such efforts to relaunch the peace operation in Yemen, the Houthis continue their military build-up and to dig tunnels. They are biding their time to launch counter-attacks against our Yemeni people and to threaten the international maritime waterways.

The political leadership and the Yemeni Government will engaged positively with the plan proposed by the Special Envoy so long as the plan takes into account the three terms of reference — the Gulf Cooperation Council initiative and its Implementation Mechanism, the outcome of the National Dialogue Conference and the relevant Security Council resolutions, in particular resolution 2216 (2015) — as the bases for consultations and peace negotiations in Yemen. To that end, my Government has provided its observations in writing to the Special Envoy.

The choice of the Yemeni Government has always been comprehensive and lasting peace based on restoring the State institutions, putting an end to the coup and re-establishing security and stability. That will not be achieved with merely verbal support for the efforts of the Special Envoy, but by bringing more political pressure to bear on the Houthi militias and through unequivocal messages from the Security Council that the international community will not accept the continuing Yemeni suffering, the seizing of State institutions and threats to international maritime navigation.

It is time to implement the resolutions of the international legitimacy. Otherwise, the solution will be contingent on the situation on the ground as long as those militias continue to control vital regions of Yemen under unfounded pretexts. That will prolong the conflict and the suffering of civilians throughout Yemen. There is daily bombardment by the militias of residential areas in Taiz, Lahij, Al-Jawf, Mar'ib and Al-Bayda, in addition to daily sniper attacks on civilians, mostly women and children, in the city of Taiz. Those acts should be condemned and the perpetrators held accountable. The militias should not be allowed to continue such acts, which are a form of genocide, let alone turn San'a into a massive jail where the so-called supervisors are free to loot and imprison or kill anyone who opposes them, especially after the recent uprising in December.

The militias' ongoing control of strategic areas in Yemen, where they launch attacks on international waterways, requires a decisive stand on the part of the Security Council. The most recent attack against the two Saudi oil tankers belonging to the National Shipping Company of Saudi Arabia and the laying of hundreds of naval mines to harm ships and Yemeni fishermen and damage the marine environment are further examples of the Iran-backed Houthi practices to undermine the interests of Yemen, the region and the whole world by imposing a sectarian agenda sponsored and supported by Iran.

The Panel of Experts on Yemen, whose mandate was extended in accordance with paragraph 5 of resolution 2402 (2018), has confirmed beyond doubt that the Houthis were responsible for the attack against the Saudi and Turkish ships on 3 April and 10 May. Those practices constitute a breach of international humanitarian law, contribute to the deteriorating security in the region and have a negative impact on commercial shipments and the delivery of humanitarian assistance to Yemen.

Everybody is aware that the attacks by these militias continue unabated against densely populated civilian areas of the kingdom of Saudi Arabia, using Iranian missiles in flagrant violation of all international laws and norms and Security Council resolutions, in particular resolutions 2216 (2015) and 2231 (2015). With regard to today's explosion near Al-Thawra hospital in Al-Hudaydah, the Arab coalition has just announced that it did not undertake any military operations in that area and has no targets there and that due investigations will take place.

The Yemeni Government, which is internationally recognized as the elected Government, underscores that all efforts of the United Nations through its Special Envoy should respect the constitutional State authorities and their legitimacy as entitled to oversee Government institutions and all the Yemeni governorates without exception in accordance with the law. The contrary would contravene the general terms of reference and international standards and enable the militias and the de facto authorities to pursue their agenda against the Yemeni people.

The international Organization has overseen the peace negotiations under the umbrella of the Security

Council in accordance with the resolutions of the international legitimacy. For the past three years and at every stage of the peace negotiations, those militias, with the world watching, have sought to undermine peace efforts by creating crises and resorting to delaying tactics. The Yemeni Government has warned against that repeatedly, and the Council knows that we were very close to making progress towards peace at the negotiations held in Kuwait, but due to the militias' intransigence, they refused to sign at the last minute.

Therefore, based on our previous experience and because we are keen to end the suffering of our Yemeni people, and believing that the best and least costly solution is a political one, we stress that any negotiations that are not based on putting an end to the coup and on the implementation of international resolutions, thereby enabling the legitimate authorities to discharge their duties towards all the people in all areas and leading to the resumption of the political process, which has been stalled by the coup, would be but hollow words that complicate the situation and fail to achieve the genuine objectives of the peace talks.

We also underscore the primacy of the confidence-building measures that were agreed upon during the consultations held in Switzerland, with a focus on humanitarian aspects, including the release of detainees and prisoners, and on ensuring that the militias do not hinder the delivery of humanitarian assistance. These militias not only seize humanitarian relief supplies but also impede their delivery and use them for military purposes. In addition, they should cease laying mines, a crime that demonstrates Houthi-Iranian recklessness and undermines the future of our people, whom they send to the front to meet their deaths on the basis of misleading slogans and information.

The upcoming consultations cannot succeed if they do not focus on alleviating the human suffering, dealing with security aspects and then achieving the desired political objectives, consecutively.

The human suffering continues in Yemen and the situation is deteriorating daily. This unprecedented humanitarian disaster of the twenty-first century is the result of a war fuelled by a foreign agenda that uses the militias to achieve its goals in the region. All relevant United Nations reports have confirmed without a doubt that those who are pillaging the wealth and resources of our people, impeding the delivery of humanitarian assistance and preventing United Nations staff from carrying out their duties freely are the same ones who are fighting and perpetrating horrendous acts to retain control of the major gateway to these resources.

My Government therefore calls on the international organizations operating in Yemen to expand their activities in order to cover all parts of the country. There are five relief centres in Yemen, each of which has land, sea and air ports that they can use to channel assistance. The decentralization of humanitarian efforts will ensure the effective use of funds and their equitable access to all beneficiaries and people affected throughout Yemen.

Looking at the international efforts made to alleviate this humanitarian disaster, we cannot but commend the genuine efforts of Mr. Mark Lowcock and his team as well as those of all international and regional organizations operating in Yemen. We also commend those donor countries that have met their commitments under the humanitarian response plan, notably the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates and the sisterly State of Kuwait. We also call on other donor countries to meet their commitments.

The Government of Yemen will continue to make all possible efforts and compromises in order to achieve lasting peace. This war was imposed on us by the militias, which staged a coup against the State and its institutions. This situation is not acceptable to the Yemeni people, even if they have to face it alone. The militias will be held accountable for any consequences related to the non-implementation of international resolutions.

In closing, I should like to say that I was asked recently by a Western official why we are not seeing a migration exodus by Yemenis, as is the case with other countries that are experiencing similar conflicts. I told him that the Yemeni people are not only attached to their land and soil, but they also have hope. They believe in an inclusive national agenda, which they hope will be implemented soon. Children in my country continue to dream of a bright future that will bring a smile back to their faces, and mothers continue to pray every day for peace, security and stability to prevail throughout Yemen. Please do not let them down.

The President: I now give the floor to Mr. Griffiths to respond to the comments made and questions raised.

Mr. Griffiths: I am very grateful to all the members of the Council and to the representative of

the Government of Yemen for their remarks. What I take from this discussion is, as you indeed summed up yourself, Madam President, when you were speaking for the United Kingdom, that there is unanimous support for the notion of the resumption of political consultations to resolve this conflict. I take from that also a confirmation that that should be the primary focus.

Efforts to resolve the crisis in Al-Hudaydah are of crucial importance, particularly to our colleagues in the humanitarian agencies. They are important to my Office in the sense that they can contribute to a sense of political confidence or, if going in the other direction, can undermine the creation of political confidence. But the objective for me, and I think for all the members of the Council, for which I am most grateful, is the resumption of political negotiations. They will be inclusive, and that also, I think, has found support, and they will look to a sustainable solution, based on the references and Security Council resolutions. I do not need to repeat to Council members how we are guided by those references and those resolutions. But they will also be guided by the gist of what has been said today, which is the need for urgent attention to an early political solution.

We are all reminded constantly — as John did so eloquently today — that delays in reaching a political solution cost lives. The math is as simple as that. That is the reason why we move quickly. I am grateful for the remarks made by the Permanent Representative of the United States, who rightly said that it is about time we started. I feel exactly that impetus, and I am very grateful for the discussion today.

The President: I thank Mr. Griffiths for his responses to the comments made and questions raised.

The meeting rose at 4.50 p.m.